

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Downtown Design and Compatibility Manual for Greensboro, North Carolina

June, 2006

Requested by City of Greensboro Planning Department

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Introduction

The Planning Department of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina seeks proposals from qualified firms for consulting services for a Downtown Design & Compatibility Manual. With an impressive amount of development occurring in the past few years within Greensboro's center city, we are seeking future development of a high design quality and respectful of the character of existing buildings and of the Greensboro community. In order to achieve this goal we are seeking standards and guidelines that will reflect the overall goals of the community as stated in our *Connections 2025* Comprehensive Plan:

- ensure that new development complements the established character of the Downtown's neighborhood and corridors, including the preservation and enhancement of significant historic resources
- enhance urban character
- improve the predictability of the review process and approval process for developers and residents alike. In Greensboro, improved design standards are needed to . . . set standards for development quality to maintain the community's special character.

The City was incorporated in 1808 and is the county seat of Guilford County. Greensboro is the third largest city in North Carolina, with an estimated population of about 240,000. The City covers just over 120 square miles. It is located in the central "Piedmont Triad Region," along with Winston-Salem to the west and High Point to the south. It is approximately midway between Atlanta, Georgia and Washington, D.C.

Greensboro has a Council/Manager form of government with nine nonpartisan City Council members. Five are elected from districts and four are at large, including the Mayor. Council members serve two-year terms.

Relationship to *Connections 2025*

In 2003, the City adopted *Greensboro Connections 2025 Comprehensive Plan*, it being Greensboro's first true comprehensive plan. *Connections 2025* emphasizes the need for better infill standards and overall higher quality design standards.

Connections 2025 provides a long range vision for future development and redevelopment of the City and its future growth area. The plan presents a community vision that seeks to improve existing design. It does this by focusing on mixed use, infill and higher density development in key locations. Within the context of Downtown, the plan calls for the establishment of a Downtown overlay district where these guidelines will be applied.

Project Description

Greensboro's Downtown comprises approximately 30 blocks of varying sizes, with neighborhoods and railroad tracks serving as the primary boundaries for the center city. Several "identity districts" have developed within Downtown over time, most significantly, a governmental services area, a cultural area, a business/office area, an entertainment and retail area and a revitalized residential area. Most buildings on

Downtown's central thoroughfare, Elm Street, were constructed at the turn-of the-twentieth century with traditional building sizes and lots of that time period, fitting into lot sizes of 25-50' x 100'. Many of these properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with some also having local landmark status. Buildings not on this thoroughfare vary widely in style, scale and use. Included in this are tall modern and post-modern office buildings, governmental buildings, places of worship and new development. Many of these new developments and infill projects are scattered throughout Downtown and are largely residential. The new ballpark and Center City Park are other new developments and amenities for Downtown.

In order to ensure that projects satisfy the goals of *Connections 2025*, Greensboro seeks to establish a manual to help guide Downtown development so as to be flexible, incorporative of many styles of design, compatible for the long-range, and with attention to quality along the streets. This will be Greensboro's first set of such guidelines. The project should be respectful of previous development and the freedoms in design that have been afforded. The major focus areas of the Manual should include, but not be limited to:

MAJOR SECTIONS FOR MANUAL

- Infill Design
Address ways to encourage compatible building development that accounts for height, massing, setback, wall plane, windows, entryways, awnings, canopies, materials, signage, context compatibility and other key elements.
- Streetscape
Comment on existing streetscape element recommendations and provide recommendations on standards for other streetscape elements. Provide alternatives for certain streetscape elements, as appropriate. Tie recommendations closely to existing context and trends in Downtown development.
Provide recommendations on ways to support strong pedestrian activity through streetscape design.
Comment specifically on existing signage and lighting standards for Downtown.
- Parking
Review ways in which to integrate parking into Downtown uses, including the screening of surface parking areas and encouraging pedestrian-friendly parking structures.
- Administrative Framework
Comment on proposed framework for administering compatibility and design framework for Downtown development.

OTHER TOPICS FOR COMMENT

- Incorporating and Identifying Locations for Public Art
Provide suggestions for how Downtown development can encourage and utilize art within the framework of building and streetscape design. Comment on types of public art that might be particularly appropriate to the scale and character of Downtown Greensboro.

- Urban Design and Character
Address ways in which future development can build upon and add value to Greensboro's existing urban character. Include ways to encourage good urban vistas, synergy between old and new buildings and uses, and integration of private and public spaces, all to enhance the attractiveness, usefulness and uniqueness of Downtown.
- Sustainability
Identify ways in which to encourage sustainability and green development practices in new and existing development in Downtown.

CITIZEN AND STAFF PARTICIPATION

Also integral to the development of the manual will be articulating a process to interact with the general public, stakeholders and staff involved in Downtown. The City of Greensboro seeks to actively involve these persons in this process in a number of ways and to the maximum feasible extent.

Description of Guidelines and Materials to be Produced

It is anticipated that the resulting Manual will fulfill the following objectives:

- Provide guidelines and materials for developing and reviewing the compatibility, standards and details of proposed building and streetscape development, particularly with the nearby context of existing and planned Downtown development, utilizing both specific and general design criteria.
- Provide an attractive, user-friendly publication, easy to understand and use for many Downtown citizens, including developers, designers, property owners, residents, elected officials and the general public.
- Describe a simple, flexible and easily-administered process for citizens and staff.
- Develop a document that is heavily illustrated, incorporating text with graphics depicting and explaining the requirements and concepts detailed in the guidelines.
- Establishing guidelines that support the implementation of related Downtown and design goals of the *Greensboro Connections 2025 Comprehensive Plan*.
- Clear standards and procedures for all users.
- Set a framework for the Manual that allows for later additions, to set standards for quality development and design in other areas of the community.
- Provide all final materials in a digital format that allows for easy updating by staff and for publication on the City's website.

Funding

City and private funds may be utilized to pay for this project. The execution of a contract for carrying out this project is contingent upon the confirmed allocation of this funding.

Roles and Responsibilities

The services sought of the Consultant are for the following tasks:

1. Orientation

Conduct a multi-day on-site orientation with all key consultant team members that will include meetings with and tours by city staff, members of the community, and stakeholder groups in order to understand the existing context and desired goals of the project. This site visit may be organized in the form of a charrette. Staff will help organize these tours and meetings. The Consultant will also receive various documents from staff that are felt to be relevant to the project, including pre-existing center city plans and will be asked to review and provide feedback on them.

2. Orientation Summary Report

The Consultant will provide a report to staff summarizing findings of the consultant team following site visits and document review, including identifying different issues facing Downtown related to achieving quality and compatible infill development. By way of example, the report would address the special characteristics and compatibility challenges of several sub- areas of Downtown.

3. Alternatives Draft Presentation

The Consultant will draft and present some initial proposals, in the form of alternatives, to provide compatibility and design guidelines for Downtown. This will include both some substantive guidelines for buildings and streetscape as well as showing a proposed format for layout of the Manual. Staff will organize meetings with key groups over a 1-2 day period with consultant team members in order to have the Consultant present and receive feedback on these parts of the Manual. Staff will review with the Consultant feedback received at the end of the site visit.

4. Full Draft and Final Manual

Consultant will prepare a Full Draft Manual and deliver to staff for review, comment and revisions. A final series of community meetings will then be set by the Consultant and staff to present and receive feedback on the draft Manual. The Consultant may be asked to attend 3-5 public or community meetings during this task. Staff will attempt to schedule these meetings to require no more than 1 or 2 site visits by the Consultant. Following the site visit(s) and a review with staff of requested changes, the Consultant will prepare a final, completed version of the Manual. The final Manual will include all text and graphics in final format. The Consultant will deliver the Final Manual, with both one camera-ready hard paper color copy and one digital version provided.

5. Staff Review of Deliverables

Staff will review and comment on each of the 3 reports, to be provided by the Consultant at least 30 days prior to each of the 3 site visit stages. Staff will comment on the reports in an effort to ensure accuracy to feedback received and adherence to the project scope and contract.

Project Budget/ Compensation

The work will be performed on a fixed price basis for a defined number of Consultant site visits, with provisions for change orders, costs for additional site visits, and time extensions. The details of deliverables, project timetable and specific payment schedule will be determined during final contract negotiations and will be based upon the Consultant proposal and the completion of identified tasks, including staff review and consultant revisions.

Tentative Consultant Selection Time Frame

June 21, 2006	RFP announcement sent and posted
July 12, 2006 4:00 pm Eastern Time	Proposal submittal deadline. City staff begins selection of firms to invite for on-site interviews and/ or presentations.
July 26, 2006	Start interviews/ presentations scheduled with finalists in Greensboro. Interviews will be conducted as follows: 1. Presentation by Consultant (30 minutes) 2. Question and answer s(30-60 minutes)
August 11, 2006	Final selection and contract negotiations
August 18, 2006	Contract awarded/ executed copies distributed
August 31, 2006	Issuance of Notice to Proceed

Contact/ Submittal Information

Interested firms should submit ten copies of the submittal response, including all attachments and exhibits by the aforementioned submittal deadline. Each proposal should be limited to 20 pages. Digital copies must be received by the same deadline and include all attachments and exhibits as well. Please deliver submittals to:

mailing address:

Mary Sertell
Urban Designer
City of Greensboro
Planning Department
P.O. Box 3136
Greensboro, NC 27402-3136

street address:

Mary Sertell
Planning Department
300 W. Washington Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

contact:

336.373.4769 (telephone)
336.412.6315 (fax)
mary.sertell@greensboro-nc.gov

Submittal Requirements:

- letter of intent signed by a principal partner
- table of contents
- narrative of proposed project highlighting the strengths of the Consultant and how previous work may inform the Downtown Design and Compatibility Manual
- role of the Consultant in working with City staff
- approach and methodology, including how the Consultant will incorporate public input and the handle the proposed site visits
- Consulting team description, including team leader and the role of each member of the team
- statement of qualifications for each team member, highlighting work on similar projects
- references- current list including contact information and similar projects for which consultant has worked with each reference
- availability of team members, including the anticipated workload of each member for the duration of the project
- estimated budget and schedule, organized by defined project tasks
- description of relationship and funding for local subcontractor (preferred, not required)
- references to or samples of representative work from similar projects

The City of Greensboro encourages participation of qualified M/WBE firms in professional service contracts. It is the intent of this program to widen opportunities for public participation, increase competition, and to ensure the proper and diligent use of public funds. All submitting firms should note the requirements of the City of Greensboro's M/WBE program as it relates to professional services. Specific inquiries regarding this program should be directed to Bobby Baskin, City of Greensboro M/WBE Facilitator at 336.373.2608.

Selection Criteria

The City of Greensboro Planning Staff, City Manager's Office and community stakeholders will comprise the interview/ selection team. Selection will be based upon, but not limited to:

- completeness of proposal
- technical approach to project
- writing and graphic skills
- qualifications of firm and key personnel
- project management experience and capabilities
- citizen participation plan
- previous performance and experience with similar projects

- clarity of role and level of involvement of local staff
- budget and schedule
- references
- involvement of local subcontractor (preferred, not required)

Following the review of proposals, the interview team will select top ranked firms to conduct interviews. After completion of interviews the team will select a firm based on the above criteria and negotiate an agreement with the selected firm. Contract execution and Notice to Proceed would follow as soon as possible.